

# FAINTLY ENGRAVED SLATE GORGET FROM TUSCARAWAS COUNTY, OHIO

by  
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As stewards of Ohio's prehistoric artifacts, it is good to remember that even humble or broken ones deserve both care and study to reveal any clues they might offer about the cultures that made them. Despite being broken, the gorget pictured in figures 1-3 has some interesting qualities that are not immediately apparent. Not only was some deliberate work done to the piece to salvage or refurbish it, but it also bears a faint engraving that had gone unnoticed.

The piece was found in Tuscarawas County and measures 2.75 inches in length on its longest side and 1.75 inches in width. It was made from a grayish-black slate that has a greenish tint in sunlight. The gorget has one complete hole which was drilled from both sides, and is located slightly off center of its width.

The gorget has a trapezoid-like outline due to the angled line where it broke though a partially drilled hole. Along the broken edge, a cone-shaped partial hole suggests that the gorget may have broken while it was being drilled (figure 3). This partial hole on the break is made from one side only unlike the complete hole that was drilled from both sides' as is typical. On the opposite end, the gorget was chipped or damaged on both the obverse and reverse sides.

Despite the central break and the damaged corners, some care seems to have been taken to salvage the piece. The slate has been smoothed along the entire length

of the broken edge, and across the two damaged corners.

From its overall appearance, the gorget was likely intended to be a "rectangular two-hole" type. In *Ohio Slate Types*, Robert Converse states that rectangular two-holed gorgets are "the most common of all gorget types." He also notes that they are "found in a number of widespread cultural contexts in the eastern United States." He associates such gorgets in Ohio with three main cultures: The Glacial Kame which dates to about 1,000 to 500 B.C., the Adena, about 500 B.C. to 300 A.D., and Hopewell, about 200 B.C. to 500 A. D.

Close examination of the salvaged piece revealed a faint engraving beside the hole (figures 4 & 5) While the gorget was acquired many years ago by the author, the engraving was only recently discovered, when sorting through the collection and viewing this piece in steeply angled light. The faint engraving is triangular in outline, crossed with at least four diagonal marks, as shown in the black line drawing (figure 6). In addition, there are other stray marks near the triangle, which may or may not be part of the engraving.

Curiously, similar engraved triangular markings can be seen in two other engraved gorgets. Figure 7 shows an engraved gorget from the collection of Robert Converse. This engraving bears a triangular outline filled with cross-hatch marks. Figure 8 is of an unbroken rectangular gorget, shown

on p. 33 of *Ohio Slate Types*, with a similar triangular and crosshatched engraving located next to one of its two holes.

In *Ohio Slate Types*, Converse makes some observations about engraved gorgets;

Quite often the engraving on slate consists of a jumble of lines and ladder-like markings with no recognizable pattern. Engraving is found on some types of slate artifacts more frequently than others; most of it seems to be on trapezoidal or square pendants and on rectangular two-hole gorgets.

He further observes "Strangely enough, incising or engraving was frequently done on broken or salvaged pieces."

Whatever meaning such an engraving might have is not apparent or recognizable. However, the attention paid to smooth and salvage the piece suggests that it bore some importance in that it was fixed and not discarded.

Whether kept in museums or private hands, the artifacts we possess are really only ours to care for. These objects have been around for many centuries, in this case, about two thousand years. They likely will exist long after we are gone. The broken gorget serves as a reminder that as stewards of these antiquities, we need to grant even the less than perfect ones a measure of care and careful study.

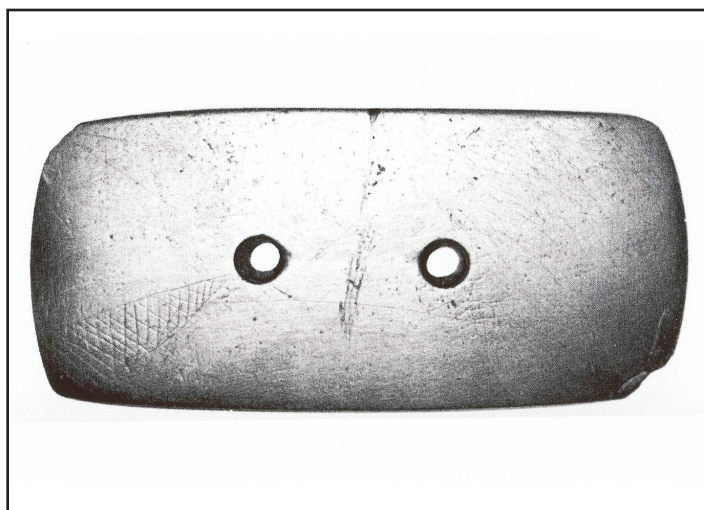


Figures 1 – 3 (Rusnak) Obverse, reverse and mid-section views of Tuscarawas County gorget.





Figures 4 & 5 (Rusnak) Two different lightiing angles to show faint engraving on Tuscarawas County gorget.



Figures 7 & 8 (Rusnak) Similar triangular engravings on broken gorget from the collection of Robert Converse (top) and on gorgeet pictured on p. 33 of Ohio Slate Types.

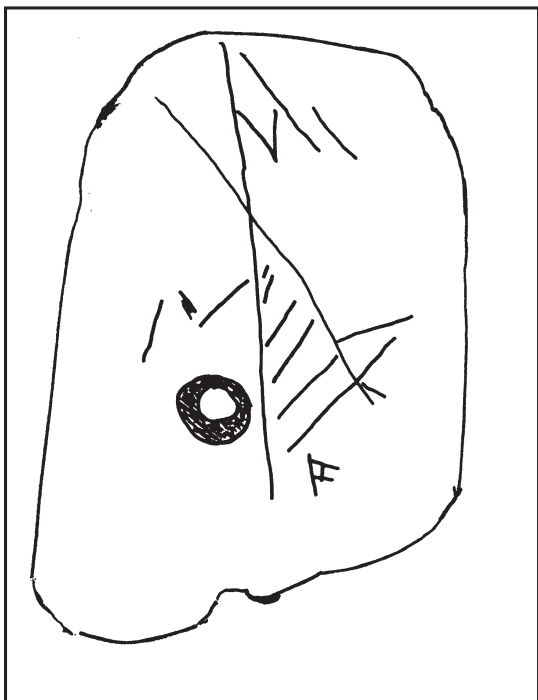


Figure 6 (Rusnak) Black line of engraving in figures 1 & 2.